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The Emerald Coast golfers have a new trail to follow  
 A South Florida golf course management company takes control of four local courses to create the Emerald Coast Golf Trail  
**BY SCOTT PAGE Splash Magazine [scott@gulfbreezenews.com](mailto:scott@gulfbreezenews.com)**



**Submitted Photo Number 11 at Shalimar Pointe Country Club offers an aesthetic view from behind the green. This is only a sample of the breathtaking scenery that can be seen while golfing on the Emerald Coast Golf Trail.**

Spring is a time for rebirth and making things anew, a resurrection from winter. The azalea bushes are blooming pretty colors of pink and white, signaling the excitement and freshness of this most beautiful season. One symbol of this progression is the celebration of Easter. Another is the phoenix.

If you look up the word Phoenix, you will find that it has several definitions. The first reference is to the bird from Egyptian mythology that was consumed by fire only to be reborn from the ashes. Another definition cites a Phoenix as something of unsurpassed excellence or beauty. With

those definitions in mind, it seems that the newly formed Emerald Coast Golf Trail (ECGT) is, actually and metaphorically, a Phoenix.

Emerging from the rubble of hurricanes Ivan and Dennis is a golfing experience that is unrivaled in its splendor. The ECGT, which consists of four courses- Scenic Hills, Pensacola; Tiger Point, Gulf Breeze; Hidden Creek, Navarre; and Shalimar Pointe, Shalimar-is the newest project of Meadowbrook Golf, Inc., based in ChampionsGate, Fla.

"The ECGT signifies the rebirth of golf on the Emerald Coast," said Gregg Gagliardi, Regional Manager for Meadowbrook. "With the beaches here and our courses being a lot closer together, we feel like this is a great opportunity to rival the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail [in Alabama]. Our courses also have the influence of five different designers, as opposed to one."



**Submitted Photo Tiger Point Golf and Country Club, located in Gulf Breeze, features this beautiful island par three. This scenic hole is number five on the East Course.**

Meadowbrook Golf positions itself as one of the premier golf management companies, and their website exclaims that customers visiting a one of their managed or maintained facilities can expect an experience that will exceed their expectations. That may be a difficult task given the reputation of the four trail courses.

Scenic Hills played host to the 1969 Women's U.S. Open Tournament; Tiger Point served as a stop on the 1988 PGA Tour; Hidden Creek hosts a U.S. Open Qualifying Tournament; and Shalimar Pointe has been a Four Star Award Winner in Golf Digest.

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Submitted Photo LEFT: Scenic Hills Country Club, designed by Jerry Pate, features a par 71, 6,689 yard championship course. It also has a comprehensive practice facility featuring a driving range and putting green. Scenic Hills is well-known because it hosted the 1969 Women's U.S. Open Tournament.

So how can Meadowbrook make good on their promise with courses that already boast such impressive resumes?

First of all, most of these courses have been fighting to recover and rebuild from extensive storm damage, and Meadowbrook, a company with access a vast array of resources, has been able to hasten their progress.

Also, the quality of amenities is an important dynamic of any golfing experience, and under the leadership of Meadowbrook, visitors can expect to see a consistently high quality and enjoyable

experience at all four locations.

"With all four courses under one umbrella, we're able to have a higher level of quality control and ensure that experiences at each of the four locations will be equally enjoyable," Gagliardi said.

These efforts are already evident as two of the sites are slated to open new clubhouses in the near future. Tiger Point will open its new clubhouse, with the new Sunset Grille, this month, and Scenic Hills tentatively plans to follow with its new facility opening later this summer. The Sunset Grille, along with the Tuscan Grille at Hidden Creek will offer some of the finest dining in the area.

In keeping with their claim to use sophisticated business practices to position properties for ultimate success, Meadowbrook's efforts to enhance the ECGT go beyond facility and service upgrades. They are reaching out to the hotel and lodging industry in order to create enticing travel packages.

"We want to help bring tourism back to the Emerald Coast," Gagliardi said. "We just struck a deal with Resort Quest and A.S.I. in order to create some travel packages. We plan on offering some great deals such as a four-day, three-night stay and one round of golf at each course for about \$350."

This all sounds great for those who are visiting the area and others who make living in the local tourism industry. But it still leaves local residents, especially golfers, wondering how this effort will benefit them.

"Locally, we're going to make these courses an important part of the community," Gagliardi said. "We have created lots of new jobs, mainly in hospitality, such as chefs, dining room managers and so forth, and we've also had to create a professional sales team to help promote the trail."

The tourism dollars the ECGT plans to draw into the area will help local economies, but they are also arranging some events to raise money for local causes.

"We plan on organizing and hosting a lot of charity tournaments in the future," Gagliardi said. "Also, we hope to be hosting two celebrity tournaments at Tiger Point."

The first of these two events, which is tentatively scheduled for July 10, has been organized in conjunction with Lawrence Tynes, a Milton native that plays for the Super Bowl Champion New York Giants. The tournament is designed to raise money for the Santa Rosa Kids' House. Another celebrity event featuring local PGA golfer Bubba Watson and sponsored by Covenant Hospice and Morgan Stanley is also under development.

As for the local golfer, especially the club member, who has been challenging these courses for years past, don't fret, the ECGT also has something in mind for you.

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"Members at each course will have privileges at the other sites," said Gagliardi. "They can play the others for a cart fee, except for Tiger Point, where they would be entitled to a lower, preferred rate."

Another exciting commodity, which will be coming soon, is a computer tracking system that will benefit locals and tourists alike.

"We are in the process of creating a computer system that tracks golfers' frequency of play and translates into rewards," said Gagliardi.

In other words, the more rounds you play at trail sites, the more rewards you earn.

More exciting amenities are also in the developmental process. One being the centralized tee-time phone line, which will allow golfers to call a toll-free line and book teetimes at all four courses. Trail sites will also offer instructive clinics in the future.

"We are in the process of hiring teaching professionals for our courses," said Gagliardi. "Once we do that we can start planning some clinics."

As the weather warms, the grass will get greener and the flowers will continue to bloom; so too will the ECGT continue to blossom into one of the Emerald Coast's most prized attractions. Gregg Gagliardi, as well as the rest of the folks at Meadowbrook Golf, is confident that this exciting new golf trail will help this region become one of the foremost golfing and vacation destinations.